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12 May 2003

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Philippines: Information on the Bigkis Pinoy political party, and any reports of violence between it and the LAKAS-NUCD party, especially during the 2001 elections (2001-2003)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The Website of the Bigkis Pinoy Foundation (BPF) states that

the Foundation views the establishment of livelihood cooperative projects on a nationwide scale as a practical vehicle for promoting self-reliance, economic development and social justice.

With this in mind, the Foundation seeks to promote, cultivate, advance, encourage, foster and contribute to the development of livelihood cooperative projects by way of providing guidance and assistance in the area of training, research, finance and other technical services that would enable these projects to develop into viable and responsive economic endeavors (BPF n.d.).

The BPF was registered as a political party in the Philippines in 2001 (CCHOPE n.d.), and, according to the Philippine Commission on Elections (COMELEC), it received 155,941 votes during the 2001 national elections (n.d.).

According to a 1 February 2001 *Business World* article, BPF members were instrumental in calling for the removal of former president Joseph Estrada from office. The article also mentioned that Efraim C. Genuino, President of the Bigkis Pinoy Foundation, was appointed by Filipino President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the LAKAS-NUCD party (Asahi.com 13 Apr. 2001), as the president and chairman of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (*Business World* 1 Feb. 2001). Genuino has reportedly worked closely with the Filipino President in the past (ibid.).

No reports of violence between the Bikis Pinoy party and the LAKAS-NUCD party could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, several sources reported that the 2001 national elections were marred by violence that led to the deaths of "approximately 100 people" (*Country Reports 2001* 4 Mar. 2002; CNN 13 May 2001; see also *The Manila Times* 15 May 2001). CNN described the 2001 national election campaign as a "proxy war between Arroyo and Estrada" (13 May 2001), and *Country Reports 2001* stated that the New People's Army, the armed wing of the main Communist insurgent faction, had "claimed responsibility for ... many [of the] election-related killings" (4 Mar. 2002, Sec. 3).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Philippines. n.d. The Philippine Commission on Elections (COMELEC). "Party List Canvass Report No. 26 (in alphabetical order) As of September 7, 2001 - 4:20 PM." <<http://www.comelec.gov.ph/results/partylist.html>> [Accessed 9 May 2003]

Additional Sources Consulted

IRB Databases

LEXIS/NEXIS

Internet sites, including:

Amnesty International

Asia Observer

Asian Human Rights Commission

Election World

Human Rights Watch

LAKAS-NUCD.com

The Philippine Commission on Elections

Philippine Headline News

Philstar.com

Political Resources on the Net

Princeton University (D. Manning's Webpage on political regime types in the Philippines)

World News Connection

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